

Exhibit No. 4Date 3-20-07Bill No. HB 608

Testimony on HB 608
March 20, 2007
Senate Finance and Claims

Madam Chairwoman, Members of the Committee,
Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you today.
My name is Mary Gilluly, and I am the Executive Director of The Family Tree Center in Billings. The Family Tree Center provides programs to support and strengthen families in Yellowstone County and the surrounding area and is a community based agency supported, in part, by the Montana Children's Trust Fund.

You have heard this morning from my peers in Bozeman and Missoula about the programs we provide. You have heard success stories about the families Trust Fund programs work with throughout the state. I could tell you dozens more, but instead, I want to talk about the importance of funding child abuse prevention services to families—in terms of both the financial and human costs involved in not doing so. I also want to address how we know prevention works.

The consequences of child abuse and neglect conservatively cost the United States \$120 billion each year, or nearly 330 million dollars each day.¹ These costs include the direct costs—social services, foster care, hospitalization for victims, mental health care, law enforcement and the judicial system—as well as the indirect costs related to the abused and neglected children who require special education services, who enter into our juvenile or adults corrections' systems, and who do not grow up to be productive, contributing members of our society.

These numbers indicate that child abuse and neglect cost every American family over \$1,400 each year. At the same time, we spend \$1.06 per American family to prevent abuse from occurring in the first place.²

Aside from the economic costs involved, child abuse and neglect takes an unacceptable toll on our children, and since the 1960's, policy makers, legislators, professionals and concerned citizens have worked to find effective ways to prevent violence against our children. Child abuse and neglect can lead to a whole host of other social problems for its victims, including substance abuse, school dropout, teenage pregnancy, involvement in the juvenile and adult corrections systems, mental health concerns, chronic physical health ailments, and, unfortunately, even death. The costs of such human suffering are incalculable.

The cost savings, both in financial and human terms, generated through effective prevention programs cannot be overstated. Studies indicate that for every dollar we spend on prevention, we can save as much as ten dollars in later costs associated with abuse and neglect.³ One study indicates that if we can help just ONE high-risk child avoid the pitfalls often created by abuse and neglect, we might save between \$1.7 and

¹ 2001, Prevent Child Abuse America (numbers updated 2005)

² 2001, Prevent Child Abuse America

³ Cost-Benefit of Prevention: Review of the Research Literature, October 2004, Southwest Prevention Center, University of Oklahoma Outreach.

\$2.3 million dollars per year.⁴ Perhaps more importantly, we can save our children from victimization that can impact them their entire lives.

We have learned, through trial and error, how to prevent child abuse and neglect. We can effectively address risk factors in families, especially when children are very young, to insure that families can successfully stay together and parents can truly nurture their children. And most prevention programs serve hundreds of families each year, at a cost far less than the \$1.7-\$2.3 million we spend to lessen the effects of abuse and neglect for just ONE child.

The Family Tree Center, for example, which utilizes "best practice" research based prevention programs with families, operates on an annual budget of under \$300,000. At mid-year, we had already provided direct services to over 318 unduplicated individuals in Yellowstone, Carbon, Stillwater and Musselshell Counties, representing 142 families, through a variety of program services. In addition, we have provided services to over 100 women incarcerated at the Montana Women's Prison, and over 4,000 children were impacted by training we provided to teachers in Yellowstone, Big Horn, and Rosebud Counties.

People ask me often, "How can you prove what you prevent?" That is a good and reasonable question. My answer is that I can prove, through program evaluations, through validated instruments that measure risk factors, goal attainment, and parenting attitudes, that at least 70 percent of the families we work with are better able to manage, have fewer risk factors and attain family goals after receiving preventative services. Over 80% demonstrate behaviorally and through self-report, healthier parenting strategies.

I understand that with limited resources, we need to react to situations that already exist. Prevention is a long term solution—not a short-term fix. If we invest resources in it now, though, I can confidently tell you, we can save millions more later. I began my career working with juvenile offenders, and I knew most days when I went to work that we were a band-aid for many "troubled" youth, youth whose problems arose largely as a result of poor parenting. Now, I go to my office, and I look at the infants, the three and four year olds who come to our respite program, and I know they deserve a chance to grow up healthy and strong, free from violence and its consequences.

We know how to provide that chance. Any investment you make in the Montana's Children's Trust Fund Endowment will help us to do it better, to serve more families, and to put in place better evaluation measures to show you we are doing it right.

Thank you.

⁴ Cohen, 1998; The Monetary Value of Saving a high risk youth, Journal of Quantitative Criminology, 14, 5-33

Partners in Prevention

Montana Women's Prison

Parenting Program:

The Family Tree provides contracted services to the Department of Corrections at the Montana Women's Prison. These services include several parenting classes, support groups, community resource information and identification, mother-child visits, as well as a monthly Kid's Day event.

Kid's Management Authority

Parent Advocacy Program:

The Family Tree Center is partnering with the Yellowstone County Kids Management Authority (KMA) as the family advocacy agency. This partnership provides parent-to-parent mentoring/advocacy, and serves children with serious emotional and behavioral needs along with their families.

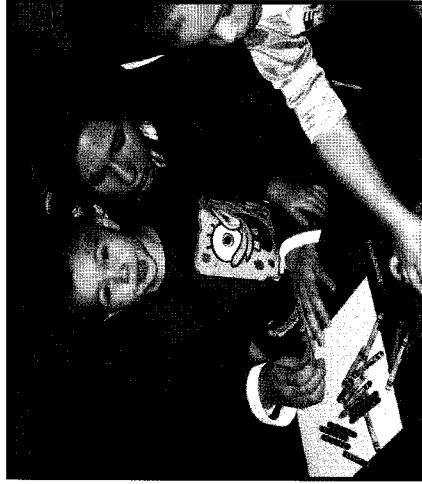
Making Connections:

The Family Tree Center prides itself on partnering with many other community agencies in hopes of reaching our common goal of supporting and strengthening families. We value our partnerships and are eager to foster connections between these providers and the families we serve.

Our Mission:

The Family Tree Center is committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect in Yellowstone County and the surrounding areas.

Our private, non-profit agency has been providing services to families since 1985, touching the lives of thousands of individuals through various program services.



Billings Exchange Clubs'
Child Abuse Prevention Center

Our programs are available to ALL families regardless of their ability to pay. Participation in any of the programs is voluntary and strictly confidential.

To find out more about any of our programs, or to inquire about opportunities to volunteer, contact us!

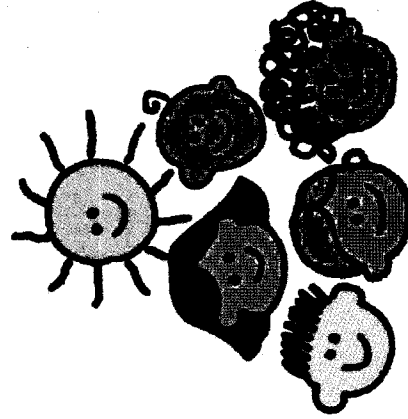


Affiliate, National Exchange Club
Foundation Child Abuse Prevention Services



A United Way Agency

The Family Tree Center



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Billings, MT 59101
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Fax: (406) 256-3014
Office Hours: M-Th: 8:30-4:30

Program Services

Parent Education:

The Family Tree Center is proud to offer the Nurturing Parenting Program.® This program is a best practice curriculum and is offered in three, age-appropriate classes:

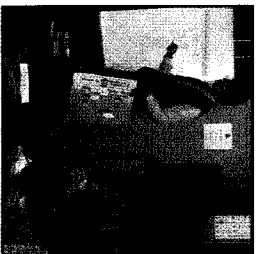
- Nurturing Babies
- Nurturing Toddlers
- Nurturing Grade-schoolers

The Nurturing Program facilitates knowledge in child development, positive guidance, the importance of self-care, and many other issues that affect families.

Program participants

meet two hours a week for twelve weeks, and are strongly encouraged to bring their child(ren).

For program dates and registration information, call The Family Tree Center during regular business hours listed on the front of this brochure.



Home Visiting:

Our home-visiting program provides families of children ages 0 to 12 with a Family Advocate who will work individually with them on goals identified together. Goal areas often include, but are not limited to:

- Community Resource Referral
- Parenting Skills
- Life Skills and Problem Solving
- Advocacy and Support

Goals attained with the support of the Family Advocate lesson the stressors within the home and improve family relationships.



Respite Care:

Our Respite Care Center is a state licensed facility providing quality, nurturing childcare at no cost to parents/caregivers in need. This service most often is used by adults who have little or no childcare resources and are looking for employment, attending classes, or simply needing a break due to unforeseen stress and/or crisis.

Respite Care has limited hours of service, so contact the Family Tree Center to inquire about availability.

P.L.A.N.T.

Parents Learning And Nurturing Together is a group formed to allow parents/guardians to support one another as they plant the seed of guidance for their children. P.L.A.N.T. provides the opportunity to share the challenges and successes of parenting in today's world, with a common desire to learn positive parenting techniques from each other. While the parents spend time with other adults, the children have an opportunity to play in a fun, nurturing environment in the childcare area located nearby.

Although the group is largely self-directed, facilitators provide information on many topics including parenting styles and nurturing family routines. Free childcare is available, and snacks provided.

Community Caring:

Community Caring is a volunteer based program that provides new parents with a source of support and encouragement in many different ways:

- Parenting Information
- Community Resource Referral
- Personal Support
- Home Visiting

Resource Library:

Books, videos, and pamphlets on a wide variety of parenting issues can be viewed or checked out from The Family Tree Center.

Prevention Education:

Prevention education programs are available throughout Yellowstone County and surrounding areas.

Personal Safety Education: Personal safety education provides children with information about protecting themselves from abuse and neglect. It also provides teachers and other adults with information regarding recognizing and reporting abuse and neglect.

Second Step

and Steps to

Respect: These programs teach children alternatives to violence, as well as help them develop empathy. They help children build healthy relationships, problem solving skills, and self-esteem.

